

## Embassy of Azerbaijan initiates links with University of Pretoria

By Sanku Tsunke

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*From left to right - HE Mr Elkhan Polukhov (Ambassador of Azerbaijan in South Africa) , Mrs Rentia Pretorius (Lecturer at Department of Political Science), Dr Yolanda Spies (Senior Lecturer and Programme Manager, Master of Diplomatic Studies), and Mr Robert Moropa (Director of University of Pretoria Library Service).*

The Embassy of Azerbaijan in South Africa has donated a collection of books to the University of Pretoria's Department of Library Services in order to provide more information on the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Although diplomatic relations between South Africa and Azerbaijan were first initiated in 1992, the Embassy of Azerbaijan only opened in South Africa in January 2012. Azerbaijan Ambassador to South Africa, HE Mr Elkhan Polukhov, said that little is known about his country, hence the decision by the embassy to donate a collection of books about Azerbaijan, which he deemed as "a first step towards a relationship with the University of Pretoria".

Ambassador Polukhov also said that Azerbaijan's leading university is preparing to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the University of Pretoria, which in future will lead to channels of exchange between the two academic institutions, both for students and academics.

Dr Yolanda Spies from the Department of Political Science at the University of Pretoria attended the book handover ceremony. She welcomed the contribution, which will be useful for research conducted within her department: "Political science cannot be divorced from broader international relations, which are interdisciplinary in nature. Therefore, historical, social and cultural factors have to be considered in our research – and these books will feed into our own interdisciplinary approach toward the study of politics and international relations," said Dr Spies.

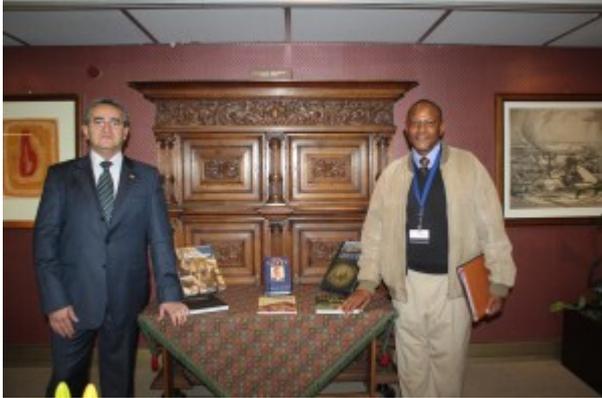
The University of Pretoria's Department of Political Science is the only institution in Africa which offers a Master's Degree in Diplomatic Studies (MDips).

Azerbaijan has been selected as a case study on foreign policy in one of the Political Science Programme's modules this year, due to the country's independent foreign policy despite it being a relatively remote and small country surrounded by influential countries, such as Turkey, Russia and Iran – all of which play a prominent role in international politics.

Azerbaijan shares political dynamics with South Africa, with both countries undergoing a political transition more or less simultaneously. Azerbaijan was formerly part of the Soviet Union until gaining independence in 1991.



HE Mr Elkhan Polukhov sign the visitors book at the University's Library, shortly after the official handover of the books.



HE Mr Elkhan Polukhov with Mr Robert Moropa.

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